

Caring for Uplands

RANDY WARNOCK / DNR

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for managing about 3 million acres of uplands in trust for current and future residents of Washington. DNR also regulates forest practices and surface mine reclamation and fights wildfires on 12 million acres of private and state-owned forest lands. The department constantly strives to find ways to more efficiently and effectively manage, protect, and regulate Washington's lands and resources.

Green certification sought to increase marketing opportunities for DNR timber

DNR has taken the first steps toward being certified as an "environmentally-friendly" forest manager and harvester. DNR engaged Scientific Certification Systems to evaluate whether 1.4 million acres of state-owned western Washing-

ton forests qualify for well-managed forest standards, as determined by the Forest Stewardship Council.

The demand for certified wood products is growing rapidly, and includes major businesses such as The Gap, Starbucks, Home Depot, Nike, and Turner Construction – the largest builder in the world. If state-owned forest lands were certified, the department would gain additional markets and bidders for state timber, which could mean potentially more money would be earned for the beneficiaries.

State forests in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and New York already have been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Certification does not increase regulation or interfere with existing rules and laws. It relies on an independent, third party audit and annual monitoring.

New help for salmon and small forest landowners too

Interim forest practices rules based on the *Forests and Fish Report* (adopted by the 1999 legislature) were approved in January 2000. The rules address the need to protect salmon habitat in forest streams by leaving larger stream-side buffers, protecting unstable slopes, and reducing the negative impact of roads and pesticides. The rules also require forest management to adapt to new knowledge about salmon recovery needs.

DNR's new Small Forest Landowner Office is helping small forest landowners with the new rules. The office provides help with understanding the rules and processing applications as well as technical assistance and advice on timber management. The office also manages the new Riparian Easement Program.

Recognizing that the new rules might make it hard for small forest owners that want to keep their land in timber, the easement program allows DNR to purchase 50-year easements along fish-bearing streams and other aquatic areas to protect habitat. The compensation the landowner receives provides



RANDY WARNOCK / DNR

Photo top: Fighting the Rocky Hull fire near Oroville, one of the state's largest fires in 2000.

Photo bottom: DNR is one of seven state or federal agencies forming incident response teams to fight wildfires and assist in other emergencies.

an incentive to keep the land in forest, instead of developing it.

In western Washington, small landowners are converting forest land to other uses at a rate of about 100 acres per day. Helping small forest landowners keep their land in forestry slows down this rate of conversion and contributes to healthy watersheds and salmon habitat.

Sand and gravel inventory helps communities protect resources

In 1910, when Washington's population was just over 1 million, the annual use of sand, gravel, and rock was about 0.4 tons per person. Today, with a population of 6 million, annual per capita use of these resources has grown to 16 tons per person. This increase reflects the dramatic increased use of these resources for constructing roads, sidewalks, buildings, driveways, and urban landscaping. As our population continues to grow, we can expect the demand for rock, gravel, and sand to increase even further.

In the past, it was common to mine sand and gravel by digging them out of river flood plains. In some cases, river beds were mined, and river channels and stream conditions were radically altered as a result. At the same time, other valuable deposits of these resources were paved or built on, making them unavailable.

To address these issues, DNR has initiated a sand, gravel, and rock deposit inventory so that local communities will have the information they need to make better decisions about where to site development and where and when to mine these resources without harming streams and fish. The first phase of the inventory, which started in 1998, is scheduled for completion in 2001. DNR specialists then will provide a series of workshops for local government employees to train them in using the new database and maps.

DNR plays key role in organizing new emergency response teams

When the fire bell rings, DNR staff battle blazes alongside federal and local fire district firefighters in new cooperative, cost-efficient fire teams.

Based on the national Incident Command System, seven highly-trained interagency incident response teams were created last spring using key state and federal firefighting organizations to respond to all emergency incidents. Team members are drawn from DNR, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, and local fire districts.

Teams are dispatched to fight wildland fires on most of Washington's state, private, and federal lands. The teams coordinate with local fire districts to protect homes and structures as required by the Washington State Mobilization Act.

In addition to fighting fires, teams are organized to respond to major earthquakes, floods, hazardous materials incidents, search-and-rescue, and other natural disasters in western states.

Banner Forest becomes Kitsap County community treasure

In the late 1980s, when local citizens in south Kitsap County learned that DNR planned to sell or trade an isolated parcel of state-owned land known as the Banner Forest, they tried to find a way to preserve the forest for local open space, wildlife, and recreation. This piece of common school trust land is crisscrossed with trails and is used for horseback riding, hiking, and viewing wildlife. The Banner Forest also contains important habitat for salmon and many other species. In November, citizens and public officials celebrated at a ceremony marking the transfer of



SUSAN ZEMEK / DNR

The Capitol State Forest near Olympia is part of the 1.4 million acres of state forests being considered for green certification.

the land from DNR to Kitsap County. The Banner Forest will continue to provide open space and much-needed relief from the spread of rapid population growth into this rural area. Funding from the county will pay for replacement properties for the trust.

DNR acquires key parcel on Tiger Mountain

Surrounded by DNR-managed lands, a 616-acre parcel was the last large piece of privately-owned land within Tiger Mountain State Forest. In 2000, DNR purchased the parcel to replace state Common School trust lands that previously had been sold. Including the parcel in the forest as state trust land eliminates boundary issues, allows DNR to manage the forest more effectively and efficiently, and provides a source of revenue to fund construction of kindergarten through 12th grade public schools statewide.